## Alma Stop # 27 More Alive than Ever!

Do you ever long for the "good old days?" If, as some people believe, ships have souls, then the *Alma* may long for them too. However, although old in age, with her modern crew the *Alma* proves that she is still young in spirit. Listen to her new crew as this spirit is revealed.

"It's like sailing your front porch..." states Al Lutz, captain of the *Alma*. And, with her rectangular design not many people would argue with him. However, it took Al some time to learn how to sail a porch. Eventually, Captain Lutz realized that *Alma's* sailing qualities were ideal for sailing on San Francisco Bay as well as up rivers and he regularly puts these qualities to use.

One such use is the "gunkholing" trip. This trip takes her up quiet inland waterways, just as she would have done during her working days. And, with only three or four people to actually sail her, the trip proves to be physically exhausting. However the trip also has its enlightening moments.

*Alma's* first mate, Alice Watts, described one such experience, "It was like taking *Alma* back in time..." she said. "One time we used the current to carry us along. No sails were up and the engines were off. It was so serene..."

Al and Alice also have tales of sailing *Alma* in the Master Mariners' race in San Francisco Bay. This is a prestigious race that was first staged in 1867. Historically, participants were sailing merchant vessels, including many scow schooners. Today, participants include traditional sailing craft, historic replicas, and the *Alma*.

Al describes this race as, "...beautiful or hell depending on the wind and current." In 2001, however, there was little current at all and *Alma* took first place in her class! Not since the year 1870 had a scow schooner ever finished first.

Some look upon *Alma* and describe her as an "old ship." In spite of her age, however, with her modern crew *Alma* maintains her vitality and proves she is not dead history.